

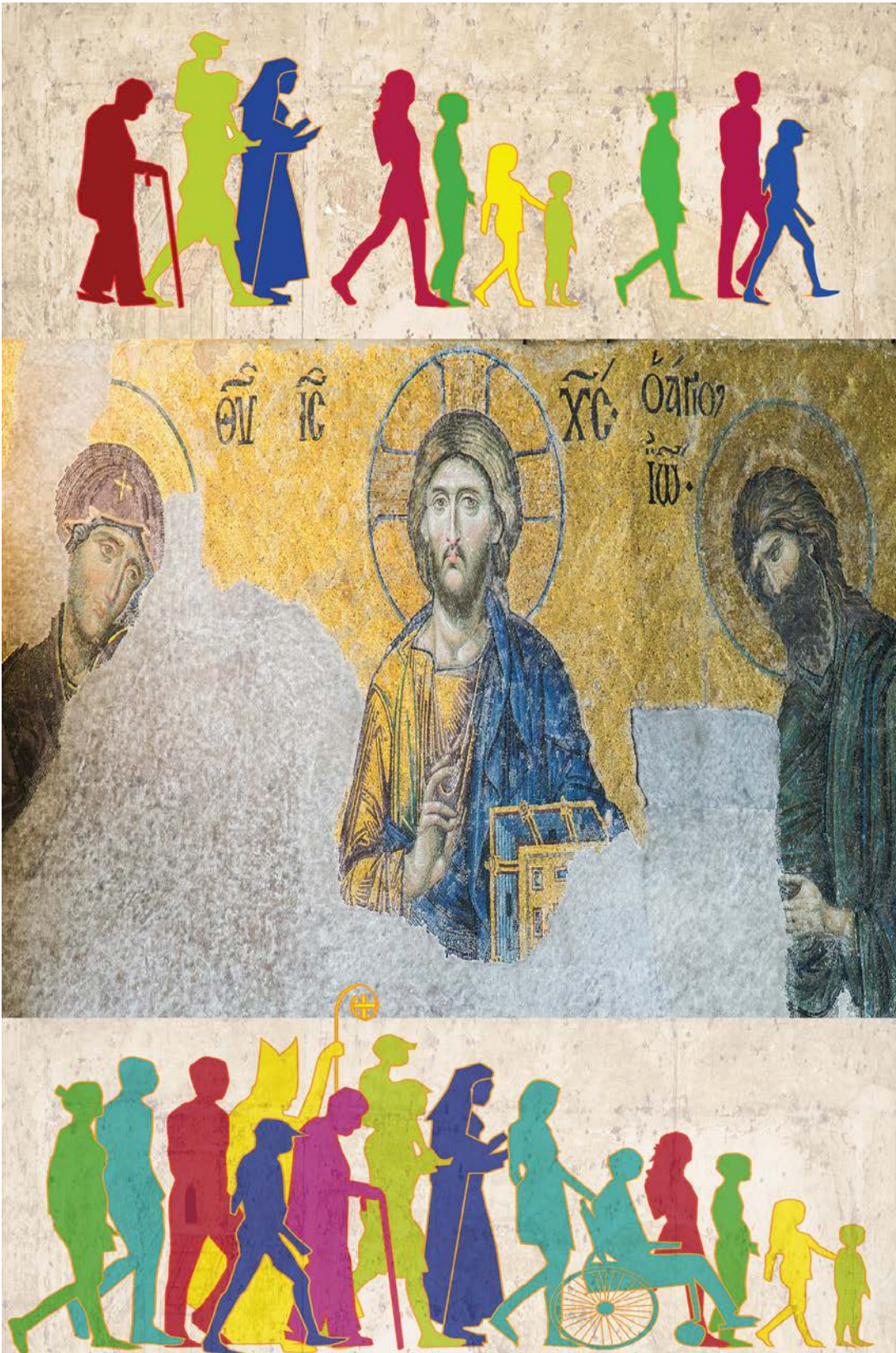
Department of Adult Education and Evangelisation



A FUTURE full of

# HOPE

LISTENING with the heart



## WE ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Communion - Participation - Mission

Journeying together from Vision into Action

*Feedback from  
the Diocesan Day  
7<sup>th</sup> October 2023*



# We are the People of God

In September Bishop Declan wrote to the whole Diocese – here is what he said:

*Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,*

*For many people September rather than January is the beginning of a new year. The reason for this is that Schools and Universities begin a new academic year which effects not only the academic population but has a bearing on family life and the volume of traffic on the roads. I would like to thank our teachers, governors, ancillary staff, parents and of course the pupils and students for making our schools places of learning in a Christian environment. In all things we are called to have the mind of Christ and to worship God in a way that is worthy of human beings.*

*This September is also a time of change in our Diocese. We are replacing the present 13 deaneries into 9 pastoral areas which will be led by the dean of each particular area. The reason for this is not for a bureaucratic purpose but to make more effective the mission of our diocese to the wider community. We are called to collaborate in this task. In this we will discover the will of God and know what is good.*

*Each of the pastoral areas will be named after a Saint of our Diocese. I hope you will be inspired by these people who have lived the Christian life in a previous time and have dedicated their lives to the Kingdom of God.*

*As well as renewing parish pastoral councils we need to revitalise deanery pastoral councils and a diocesan pastoral council. On October 7th, at St Bernadette's School, Whitchurch there is to be a diocesan day which will inform and guide us with the formation of these various councils. There will be a series of group conversation. David Wells will help us to focus on the purpose of the day.*

*The task of the councils is to identify the needs of the wider community as well as the church community and to respond as best they can to meet those needs. This includes chaplaincy, schools, universities, hospitals, and prisons. As I have said many times if we are inward looking, we will die but if we are outward looking, we will be challenged but we will live and know that we are faithful to the Gospel.*

*The preparation for the Synod on Synodality which opens in October, has shown us the importance of listening to one another. In listening we show respect and often are enriched by what we hear. The councils should be places of listening to the Word of God, listening to one another rather than promoting a particular cause or idea of what we think others should be doing or thinking.*

*In the Gospel today Peter is not really listening to Jesus because he does not like what Jesus is saying. We too can be like Peter wanting to hear our own words rather than the Word of God who is Jesus who makes visible the presence of God the Father and promises us the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is life to the Church and enables the mission of the Church in ways that can be unexpected. We are all disciples following Jesus and discovering the meaning of the Kingdom of God. We are all learners called to deepen our relationship with God through Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit who renews our lives and the face of the earth.*

*The proposed changes in our diocesan life is a continuation of what we reflected upon in consideration of Mission, Communion and Prayer. The fruit of those reflections is contained within 'Called to be a People of Hope' and 'Parishes in Communion for Mission'. Pope Francis calls us to deepen our understanding of communion, participation and mission which is similar to our reflections.*

*I look forward to meeting some of you at the diocesan day and hope to see many of you in schools and parishes throughout the coming Academic Year.*

You can listen to Bishop Declan here: [cliftondiocese.com/news/diocesan-new-pastoral-areas/](https://cliftondiocese.com/news/diocesan-new-pastoral-areas/)

A map of the new Pastoral Areas and a list of the Churches attached to each Pastoral Area can be found on the website and at the back of this report.

On 7th October 2023, representatives from across the Diocese gathered at St. Bernadette's School in Bristol. The purpose of the gathering, which included clergy and lay people, was to explore the ways by which the parishes within our new Pastoral Areas could work together.



## Participation

For the day to be effective and fruitful, it was considered important that every Church/Mass centre within a parish was represented at the event. A request was made to all Parish Priests to invite two people from each community to attend the meeting. When identifying these people, the priests were asked to consider those people most likely to have the commitment and willingness to take things forward following the event. It is acknowledged that for some parishes this was more difficult than for others. Consequently, some people arrived not knowing why they had been invited and not knowing about the new Pastoral Areas. Whilst this raises questions about communication across the Diocese, the overwhelming majority had some understanding of the purpose of the day.

In addition to lay people, all clergy (Priests and Deacons) were invited to attend and specifically the Deans of the new Pastoral Areas. It was a very positive experience to see a good percentage of the clergy attend with almost all Pastoral Areas represented.

On the day itself, some people who had been invited and allocated to a group, did not arrive. However, about forty people arrived who were not expected. Some of these were last minute replacements for those who could not come. The others had heard that the event was happening and thought it was an open event for all. As a key part of the day were the group discussions, these people need to be allocated groups. Initially a challenge for the organising team, the good will of everyone ensured that this was eventually achieved quite smoothly.

## Facilitation of the Event

There were four key aspects to the day: Prayer, Mass, Talks and Spiritual Conversations.

### Prayer

The day began with prayer. It was important that the day was rooted in a significant time of prayer to allow participants to engage with what was to follow, prayerfully and for the Holy Spirit to have a central role in the proceedings. The scripture passage which formed the heart of the time of prayer was: 2 Corinthians 3: 3-5 [The Passion Translation].

*... you are living letters written by Christ, not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God—not carved onto stone tablets but on the tablets of tender hearts. We carry this confidence in our hearts because of our union with Christ before God. Yet we don't see ourselves as capable enough to do anything in our own strength, for our true competence flows from God's empowering presence.*

*He alone makes us adequate ministers who are focused on an entirely new covenant. Our ministry is not based on the letter of the law but through the power of the Spirit. The letter of the law kills, but the Spirit pours out life.*

*If you were not present at the event, you may like to take some time to pray this passage before reading any further.*

The prayer time lasted for 20 minutes whilst we reflected on Paul's second Letter to the Corinthians in silence having begun with an invocation to the Holy Spirit.

## Talks



The first of two talks given by David Wells followed the prayer time. The purpose of the first talk was to encourage people to think about how we might approach the changes that are facing the Diocese and specifically the Pastoral Areas. Specifically, we were being encouraged not to get into making plans but to consider what kind of people we could be when we gather and how that might influence the direction of our meetings, our planning and decision making.

### **The Key Message of the First Talk**

*‘Encourage one another and build each other up’*. Thessalonians 5

The emphasis in David’s first talk was that if we are to work effectively in our Pastoral Areas, we need to see things differently. His talk focused on how this might look and how we might BE and what the inherent risks could be if we continue to do things the way that we have always done them. David drew on the writing of St. Paul to remind us that he did not focus on strategy but on how we are to be together. The dominant disposition highlighted by St. Paul is encouragement. We need to encourage one another, building each other up and living in peace with one another.

The importance of giving time and focus to this approach is to avoid getting straight into business, organising groups, and making plans which have the capacity to unravel when the heart of what we are about is forgotten.

*‘Be Attentive to the Holy Spirit’*.

We do this by rooting ourselves in the scriptures. We must be attentive to the Holy Spirit, to the call to prayer and then the call to WHO ARE WE when we are together. David encouraged us not to fall for the worldly, professional model of doing things – having a strategy and plans. Rather, we are a Church rooted in the Holy Spirit, built on the teachings of Jesus Christ with the love of the Father. If we tune into this, it will enable us to act with love for one another so that all may flourish.

We do this by beginning to listen and having a readiness to recognise it requires a deeper conversion of attitudes and structures, as well as new approaches to pastoral accompaniment. It requires a readiness to recognise that the peripheries can be places where the call to conversion resounds along with the call to put the Gospel more decisively into practice.

*‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts’*. Is 55:6-9

Acknowledging the challenges that face our Diocese, David spoke of the need for us to look after our clergy, the resources we have at our disposal and consider how we can organise ourselves effectively. He emphasised that we are on a journey that will not be easy. It will require us to make often complicated and difficult decisions involving the hearts of people. We are called not to shy away from this but to embrace it.

You can watch David's full talk here: [cliftondiocese.com/news/diocesan-new-pastoral-areas/](http://cliftondiocese.com/news/diocesan-new-pastoral-areas/)

At the end of David's first talk, he posed one question for our groups to reflect upon.

- What will be the character of our Pastoral Area Meetings?

## The Spiritual Listening Conversations

Rather than engage in discussions, the groups were asked to participate in a Spiritual Listening Conversation. This process requires everyone in the group to listen attentively to each person speak in turn without interruption. Each group has a facilitator and a note-taker. A moment of silent prayer starts the session. In between each person speaking there is a pause to allow what has been said to settle in the group. The focus of the first round is to prayerfully respond to the question.

The first round is followed by a second time of prayer before beginning again. In the second round each person is asked to respond to what they have heard in the first round – what resonated with them and what inspired or challenged them. The same process is followed as for round one with appropriate silences and everyone listening.

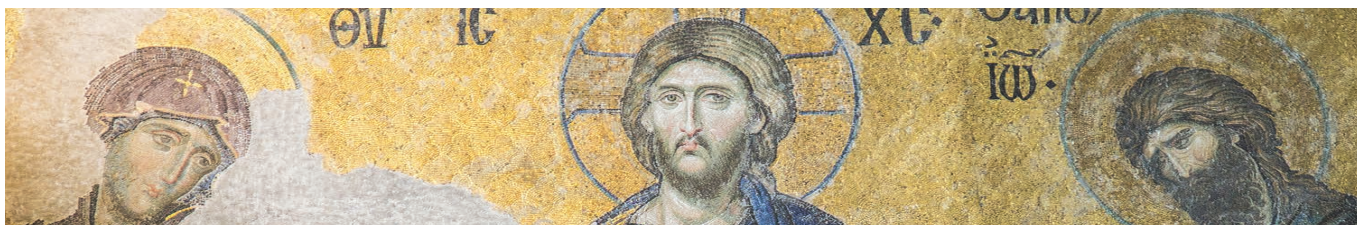
The third and final round requires the group to draw out the fruits of the listening. What key points seem to be common to the group, in response to the question asked at the beginning. The facilitator has the role of helping the group to come to an agreed statement to present in the plenary session.

## HEART TO HEART - Key Points from David's Second Talk

David's reflections in his second talk flowed from the conversations and feedback from the morning.

Impressed by the quality of work, David focused on three themes which he discerned had emerged from the morning session.

1. Listen to the Longing of your Heart.
2. Prayer and Discernment.
3. Disposition of Joy as a source of energy – fresh start, positivity, flourishing, hopeful warmth, fearlessness.



## Listening to the Longing of your Heart

Within this theme, David encouraged us to consider what it is we want...what is it that we truly desire? St. John Henry Newman speaks of Heart speaking to Heart. When we speak or act from a heart-to-heart perspective we will rely less on protocols because we will be doing the right thing, but we do need to discern.

The fruits offered emphasised a desire that we be a Church not for ourselves but a Church that wants to serve the world, in all its brokenness. David recognised within us a deep desire to be there for the broken; to be welcoming and inclusive. The temptation, David reminds us, is to feel we must get it all done now, which creates a sense of urgency that is misplaced. We must guard against this. What we have to remember is that the programme of Jesus is a heart which seeks the heart, that sees where love is needed. This is why not every Pastoral Area will look the same – each area will encounter pain and suffering in different ways and respond in different ways. Engaging with the heart takes us beyond thinking about me and mine.

## Prayer and Discernment

At the heart of prayer and discernment is our capacity to be good listeners – listeners to one another and listeners to the Lord, to the Holy Spirit. Tuning into the Holy Spirit will help us to discern who we are being called to be and how we are called to respond. Rather than making quick decisions we are being invited to grow in our ability to hold and listen to the heart, to the Holy Spirit. To quote David, ‘Your groups don't have to carry the burden of getting everything done. But do it wisely. Don't panic. Don't rush. Take your time. Look into the hearts of each other, grow in love and say what is the spirit?’ He reminds us not to run so fast that we leave others behind or burden others but to be confident in the Lord.

*‘And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ’.* Phil: 1:6

## Disposition of Joy

When we speak of Joy we are not talking about ‘being in a good mood’ or cheerful. Joy has several expressions and to understand this David suggests that we think about ‘energy’. If our meetings are joyless then we need to stop and think. How do we recover a corporate sense of joy so that our mission gives us energy. When we are doing what we are meant to be doing energy grows. It gives us a sense of being in the right place at the right time.

You can watch David’s full talk here: [cliftondiocese.com/news/diocesan-new-pastoral-areas/](http://cliftondiocese.com/news/diocesan-new-pastoral-areas/)

David’s question following this second talk was:

- Within our Pastoral Areas what are the potential benefits, the directions and the movements that we could go in? What will be our next step?

There followed a further Spiritual Listening Conversation.

## THE GROUPS - The Experience

Feedback about the groups and observations made, suggest that the groups worked well. For the most part, people honoured the silence and the encouragement to listen attentively to each person. This is not to say that the experience was perfect for everyone. The Spiritual Listening Conversation is an alien experience for many people. We are used to debating and arguing but not listening. The role of the facilitator is crucial to the process. It does require them to be firm but gentle and allow for the dissenting voices. If a facilitator is unsure of themselves, this can become tricky. Spiritual Listening Conversations take time and practice but do allow for every voice to be heard.

The groups found it harder to produce a succinct statement in response to the questions offered during the day. This is another skill that requires practice and an understanding of how we discern together.

## Feedback from the Sessions

Unfortunately, not all groups identified themselves, but we have tried to record faithfully all that the groups spoke about as given to us on the sheets at the end of the day.

The first stage of the feedback reflects the question - how will we BE? The second and third parts relate to the benefits of working together in Pastoral Areas and next steps. It has been suggested that the first question had already been answered by David but there is a richness in hearing how people have heard his message and interpreted it for themselves. It is a common feature when listening to someone that different people hear different things. A criticism of how the question was posed is that it did not allow for people to express any negative feelings about what was for some, new information regarding the Pastoral Areas. To clarify, however, the purpose of the day was to present a way of approaching our new way of being the Diocese. The opportunity to express concerns and possible unhappiness, will be a part of meeting as a Pastoral Area where voices can be heard and responded to with understanding and compassion, but with a backdrop of how to move forward.





## THE FEEDBACK – How Will We BE

- Theme of listening with understanding kindness, dialogue love & patience overcoming dislike of change. Drawing on the Spirit – being open to truth. Giving voice to ensuring everyone is heard.
- To be joyful, open-minded, aware of our gifts. To listen carefully, be prayerful, encouraging and communicating with each other. To be non-judgmental and appreciative of others' points, without barriers, reflecting on our core values and sacramental heritage.
- Awareness – we had this mountain analogy of looking down and seeing lots of small battles being fought independently. If we can climb the mountain together, we can work more in unity from a wider vision (tribal mentality).
- Warm and welcoming, consciously include disparate groups without judgment. Be clear about what we believe. Advocate fellowship before discipleship but then learn faith in depth.
- There is no growth without change and see this as an opportunity. We need to let go of old ways (optimism is necessary).
- We want to be a beacon in the community where we are joyful and embrace change. We are called to listen to those who disagree with us and be open and interested. To hear the hurt and the pain of change.
- To be more caring, loving, inclusive of family supporting each other through thick and thin. Jesus calls us to conversion of heart. To be the change we want to see in others.
- We will be joyful, hopeful, vulnerable, open, transparent, and accepting in the presence of the Holy Spirit. We will be brave, to dream. We will pray for discernment. Going from being right with each other into doing right with each other.
- Be prepared for anything. Be open. Not to dismiss any ideas. To be inclusive. To be open to learning something new – to expand of views. To respect the presence of the Holy Spirit in others. Listen deeply. To be flexible, vulnerable, accepting and discerning. Appreciate that others may have fears and anxieties that need to be addressed Prepare with Prayer. Leaving yourself behind. Welcome all who are 'other'. Hope & trust in the future. Being formed by the Holy Spirit in Scripture.
- Let us come together prayerfully, acknowledging the presence of the Holy Spirit in everyone present. Let us welcome all not being dismissive of anyone's ideas, accepting we are all 'other' different by the nature of our lives experience and families. We have to appreciate the fears and anxieties of others. We need to leave ourselves behind in order to listen deeply to others and to be flexible accepting and discerning. We need to hope and trust in the future with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Prayer leading to action. Being authentic, Christ-like. To prepare for change, and be willing to work together, recognising the different gifts and skills that exist among all people.

- How shall we BE together in order to bring about the change we hope for?  
 Welcoming – open/social/caring/supporting.  
 Family – inviting/diversity/inclusive/acceptance.  
 Engagement – cultures/ages/communicating-listening.  
 Liturgy and prayer, Common Mission.
- We were inspired by Phil Ch2:2...*‘In humility consider others better than ourselves...’* We spoke about the beauty in others, standing on Holy Ground and staying close to the Cross. Offering time, loving friendship and loving kindness and listening.
- As people of prayer and hope we joyfully come together thanking each other for our gifts, valuing our differences, caring for each other and our broader community. Socially involving all in that joy and communication our happiness, faith and pastoral community and mission.
- Do not be afraid to be inclusive, embracing Christ like openness to new ways of welcoming the vulnerable and witnessing to the world. We will need to pay attention to our formation and support each other with empathy.
- How we can be: an inclusive family; guided by the Holy Spirit; that listens joyfully; nourished by a defending awareness of God’s love and mercy; hopefully of sharing eternity together.
- ‘Be together’. Desire to listen without judgment. Anxiety about losing people from the church. Wish for a joyful spirit when we meet, demonstrate this together in social situations. Joyfulness to lead to participation in parish life. Open minded. Invitation leads to parish welcome. How does the parish look from the outside? Excitement in being together – change will come. Do we give time for prayer/silence? Spend time together beyond parishes. Are we challenged? Opportunities to learn. Respect for each other.
- Recognise need for silence and prayer. Opportunity to think about what we are doing for today. Joy of young Catholics, how do we approach this? Time and silence together is a powerful thing. What do we look after in our parish? Listening. What are we listening to? Worried about the nature of change within the Church – what is to come? Power in simply being with people in a humble way – open to the conversation.
- Important: listening to each other, in particular the clergy and laity has emerged as a theme. The listening needs to be based on openness, joy and sharing to allow the spirit to speak to us in scripture and each other. Change can be exciting. We must learn a new way to be together, meaning united whilst journeying together, without losing identity and richness of tradition.
- Being together not just about how we’re organise; fellowship, fraternity, loving respectfulness; listening/discernment; model of Early Church – how did Jesus relate to his disciples; focal point – the table – food, nourishment. The Eucharist: recognising we are all disciples of Christ.



- We want to share our faith together so that we are known. We want to be together in Spirit, a community which is friendly like a family in ways that are warm and welcoming; a warm welcome with a smile from the priest and the parish family, including for the children. We want to help each other to grow and to flourish in prayer, self-knowledge and self-belief as God intends. We want to bring people joy so that they want to participate, and they want to return.
- A real, authentic willingness and enthusiasm & commitment to collaboration; to working closely; to building the wider family; to pooling and sharing resources; to offering gifts; to learning from one another; to recognising our gifts and supporting what may not be strong; to keep local identity but revelling in working together; to expressing and extending joy for living the Gospel.
- When we gather as community, we recognise that we 'be' as a people grounded in prayer.
- We recognise a real desire in each of us for the building of community, how important community is for us.
- We want an openness, a hope to be inclusive, welcoming, 'seeing' people for who they are, and acknowledging the many needs of those who cross our thresholds.
- Listening vulnerability. Patience. Listen & supportive. Listening, communication, patience, tolerance. Understand accept difference, love - big heart. Positivity. Love, prayer, diversity. Member of a family. Act justly, love messy, walk humbly. Optimism with great hope, joyful, shared love. Welcoming to strangers. Welcome hospitality, open. Flexible not just little church group.
- Thinking about what changes God wants rather than what we want. Wonderful things coming from Rome. Flourish through changes. Together in mind, open minded, welcome new people. Will be change. Leave behind old agenda. Belief in Holy Spirit. God is with us.
- We, as a church want to come together and grow with love and confidence in our faith. Each member old and young, helping each other follow the example of Jesus Christ.
- We shall come together joyfully to positively support each other welcoming others and being a community that reflects the love of God.
- Think what changes God wants rather than us. Trust God. Flourish through change. Love – God & each other. Prayer – the people of the Church. Listen – supportive. Vulnerability. Patience. Accept differences – diversity. Optimism – energy – joy – shared love. Welcoming – strangers/family. Leave behind agenda. Together – community – tune in, don't carry – don't pull out weeds in case not the wheat! Belief in the Holy Spirit. God will mould us.

## **Within our Pastoral Areas what are the potential benefits, the directions and the movements that we could go in? What will be our next step?**

### **Potential benefits, the directions and the movements that we could go in:**

- Sharing support, inspiration reaching out, we can't do everything, shoring up our faith.
- Sharing gifts, ideas, resources, time. Forming new friendships (St Paul: Mission). Radical changes – new parish boundaries; serving people; looking at new population growth; planned closure, rebuild new parishes; pastoral ministry in places with no Masses; opportunity to meet the youth; sense of support; connection through Holy Spirit; dialogue with congregation; start engaging; feedback; focus on weaker parishes; sharing resources; organising events in a wider scale; to get to know each other better; feel like a family; gifts of clergy & laity; sharing the gifts – beyond the parish; enthuse; support talent not to burn out; consult over practicalities; communication – sacramental collaboration; recognising laity & deacons; actions speak louder than words; keep the momentum; coordinators for pastoral areas.
- Missionary Church: lateral thinking; diverse Churches; will take time, nervousness in the parishes with elderly.
- We need to identify and acknowledge the challenge but recognise the benefits, the opportunities for sharing, skills, thoughts, ways of doing things and opportunities for learning. We need to avoid counsel of fear, embrace change, and accept this will require effort.
- Coming together as equals; looking for the needs around us, both locally and globally; sharing experiences and skills; listening to each other; giving voice to all.
- Networking / support; sharing human resources and material / knowledge; collaboration/ best practise; building a growing family/inclusivity.
- Inclusivity, based on the understanding of the needs of each parish community and individuals.
- Sharing resources – money/people/time/insights/Liturgical needs.
- Recognising other parishes vision (and helping to resource it).
- Being able to provide emergency care (field hospital).
- Reforming a less priest centre community (formation) with clergy and laity.
- Disruption of existing power structures in parishes.
- Making parishes accountable to the pastoral area.
- Make sure that everyone is served according to the Gospel. Be generous in giving and the pooling of resources. Be positive and open to change. Good communications and work together in hope to be stronger together. To embrace opportunity and beware of cynicism. Work to overcome people's fear and worry. See the process as a fresh start. Work to know each other in the whole pastoral area.

- The positive benefits of meeting in the pastoral area are manifold. There is the possibility of co-ordinating various groups.eg youth ministry, ethnic groups. There may be a drawing together of the congregation of each parish to learn from and enjoy the differences that exist and celebrate what we have in common. We need to communicate what the purpose of the changes are so that people understand the changes, challenges and benefits. We need the clergy to utilise lay skills and clergy to support the clergy.
- Opportunities to enlarge the space of our tent – what paradoxically seems loss may be transformed into gain; grow the family; with other parishes; deliver more initiatives such as Laudato Si, including cross-parish.
- Re-connecting with Vatican II in order to open the windows through prayer and enable the fresh air of the Holy Spirit to enter and energise through: providing support through working in partnership; disturbing each other lovingly; widening our sense of belonging so that no one is left behind.
- Further opportunities for sharing, and building relationships, including the pooling of resources in and formation. Include sharing the faith stories and encounters, physical resources. Opportunities to build relationship and meet. The PA meetings may help us to better see the needs of the area itself. Technology – mixed methods, environmentally important.
- Opportunity for reset, fresh start, revival positive benefits – developing community that represents the diversity within our parishes; sharing ideas, resources, learning; opportunity for energy & spirit-filled meeting of like-minded workers for Christ in charity and compassion; an opportunity to grow in harmony to help and support each other using Synodal skills.
- Social & prayer meeting inviting all providing food, whole ministries can meet ahead of a more formal Synodal process.
- Can we grasp technology to reach out in ways yet to be discovered?
- Opportunity. Knowledge. Empowered. Constantly learning. Communication. Neighbours. Positive & collaborating. Beneficial – experience, diversity, widening experience, to be welcomed. Awareness of bigger Catholic World. Coming together. Father announced in Mass- grateful for knowledge. Open up hand and heart so Christ can use me. Responsibility now to go back to expand knowledge to everyone in parish. Be led by the Spirit.
- Think as grandparent, family changes and get bigger all the time. Extension of family to learn from each other fruits to be harvested. Availability of priest. Give and receive. Sharing of love and knowledge by people of Church. Parishioners involved to assist priest to carry out duties. Strengthen service. Change is good, priest helped, better community. We love our church and want it to grow. Parish priest be to pastoral. Priestly vocation is not the only vocation at church. We are all called to church. 1/4 priest – same institutions. Ministry is to be shared! Heart that sees! Deeper into Holy Spirit. Direction coming from Lord. Listen to the Lord. Key people. Shape future ourselves! Take time – Adoration and quiet.
- New = stress. Attracting through joy of Gospel. Relationships are key – multiple to consider within – Care – outwith - Joy. Relationships. Acceptance of difference. Embrace the tensions.

- Listen and learn from others. Encourage movement/travel to other areas. Creative scheduling of meetings. Practical solutions regarding issues eg. transport between parishes. Visiting other areas to see how others run sacramental preparation. Helping remove the ‘weight’ of running parishes day to day from the priest alone. Inclusion of school – encourage communication. Greater use of technology. Speaking to those on the edge of our community to ask what they need.
- Meeting in parish areas will allow us to learn from each other. With the grace of the Holy Spirit there will be unexpected benefits. We can’t share our talents without knowing each other. Initially the contact could be social and prayerful, sharing a meal and Scripture. There will be benefits from parishes being able to share solutions, help each other, share liturgies and economies of resources. There could be opportunities of a PA Mass at a central venue, when parishes could come together to promote a collective sense of joy and unity. There has to be a sensitivity to the increased size means physical distance will be demanding and that the sense of parish identities will be challenged, and some may feel defensive and anxious. We need to ensure change is not made for its own sake.
- There is a recognition of a desire an appetite for a renewal of freshness. This is underpinned by love, joy, encounter, spiritual friendship, thankfulness, gratitude. An encouragement in interaction of people of all ages and affirmation. A recognition of the diversity of people in our communities.
- Benefitting from the strength of each parish. Building communities and getting to know people. Efficient communications will be very important. Meeting of all pastoral area parishes together – Synodal meeting, regular meetings.
- Positive benefits: we can take this as an opportunity to place ourselves within something greater than the sum of our parts. To be more coherent and focussed on our mission to love by and share the teaching of Jesus Christ. Sharing: knowledge, resources, challenges, solutions. Always remember – where 2 or more gather.
- Raising the profile of the pastoral area to highlight it as a missionary venture that has relevance and something to offer for all in our parishes and beyond.
- Positive benefits: sharing resources and skills (laity). Diversity from personal uniqueness (gifts and talents). Prayerful new start guided by the Holy Spirit (not doing a new thing in an old way). Look beyond of own parish and Mass.
- Think what changes God wants rather than us. Trust God. Flourish through change. Love – God & each other. Prayer – the people of the Church. Listen – supportive. Vulnerability. Patience. Accept differences – diversity. Optimism – energy – joy – shared love. Welcoming – strangers/family. Leave behind agenda. Together – community – tune in, don’t carry – don’t pull out weeds in case not the wheat! Belief in the Holy Spirit. God will mould us.



## Our next steps proposed by the groups:

- Practical steps, sharing contacts, a map or handbook, setting out who does what, what are the resources available.
- A travelling vision group around the pastoral area. Start small: go to other Masses, 'Priest Swap Sundays', encouraging people that they won't lose their identity. Living out providence challenge really is an opportunity.
- Talk to one another! Support our priests and deacons.
- Explain what the PA means to the parishes, leading to listening conversations with all sections of the community – then work out step 2.
- To learn, listen and develop from where it is happening already within the parishes. To listen and communicate is the key to everything we do. Enable all parishes to be able to be fully inclusive.
- Organise gathering/small groups/short liturgy followed by meal.
- Set a date for a pastoral area meeting.
- Hold a joyful pastoral area initial event.
- Within each pastoral area to offer a joyful liturgy in which everyone is invited and encouraged to prayerfully open their hearts.
- A focus upon communication / understanding. Who takes the next steps?
- A more 'local' today – opportunity to be formed; formation for those who represent the parishes; moving slowly and prayerfully, discerning choices.
- To move forwards not backwards. Pray together locally and pastorally. Share resources, knowledge, and experiences. The laity to be involved and active locally. Mindfulness of changes affecting emotionally. Pace ourselves.
- Establish a Synodal gathering in each parish to discern through prayer and contemplation: Listening is the way forward. Replicate this at Pastoral Area level – networking, getting to know, sharing skills. It's always about connection: laity-led (and including everyone/clergy). Benefits – connection!
- Pastoral area newsletter, website, meeting of all PA parishes together.
- An open meeting to communicate the vision, leading to subsequent thematic meetings to focus on what we need to do to achieve our purpose.
- Be open to the Holy Spirit and always begin with prayer & discernment.

## Drawing Together the Fruits



At the end of the day we were able to hear Canon Colin Mason VG draw together the fruits of the day. In doing so he offered us encouragement to go forward and share the experience we have had with our communities.

He began his reflection by putting the day into a context and specifically the language of Pastoral Areas. He explained that in the past we have always talked in terms of the Diocese being split into deaneries, a concept that many people do not necessarily understand or know about. The language of Pastoral Areas has been adopted to encourage us all to think about how we can work within a wider area and particularly in a pastoral manner.

Canon Colin reflected that throughout the day we had been encouraged to deeply listen to one another. This capacity to listen and share and discern together is going to be important for us. We are being invited to listen to every voice including the quietest voice and in doing so to remember that we need to communicate with everybody. Through this experience Canon Colin expressed a hope that we will see this as a new beginning of working collaboratively across the areas – whether it is in small clusters of churches or the whole Pastoral area. It is hoped that we can let go of the silo mentality which many of us find ourselves inhabiting. This is a new direction for us, challenging but exciting. We will have different experiences – no Pastoral Area will be the same. There is no one size fits all plan – we have to respond to the needs of our own area and meet the challenges that lie ahead with courage and energy.

Canon Colin reminded us of David's words – having the desire, wanting to embrace change and move forward. If we are positive, then we can grasp this. We have the initiative and if we do this it will lead to a deepening sense of communion.

Our next steps are to take what we have heard and shared back to our Pastoral Areas and pondering what is in our heart and guided by the Holy Spirit, take the next steps forward.

For Canon Colins reflection listen here: [cliftondiocese.com/news/diocesan-new-pastoral-areas/](https://cliftondiocese.com/news/diocesan-new-pastoral-areas/)

## Need some help or support?

If your Pastoral Area would like support from anyone in the Curia please do not hesitate to ask. We are here to serve the parishes and are happy to respond to requests. Depending on your request please contact one of the people below:

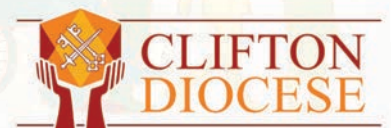
Adult Formation: [Sarah.Adams@cliftondiocese.com](mailto:Sarah.Adams@cliftondiocese.com)

Schools: [Mary.Cox@cliftondiocese.com](mailto:Mary.Cox@cliftondiocese.com)

Property: [Jo.Long@cliftondiocese.com](mailto:Jo.Long@cliftondiocese.com)

Finance: [Simon.Hussey@cliftondiocese.com](mailto:Simon.Hussey@cliftondiocese.com)

Safeguarding: [Janice.Pearson@cliftondiocese.com](mailto:Janice.Pearson@cliftondiocese.com)







## DECLAN BISHOP OF CLIFTON

Deanery / Pastoral Area	Parishes	Location
<b>St Edmund of Abingdon</b>	St Bonaventure's St Mary on the Quay University Chaplaincy	Bishopston Bristol Clifton
<b>Dean Fr Eugene Campbell</b>	St Nicholas St Augustine of Canterbury St Teresa of the Child Jesus St Joseph St Antony's Our Lady of Lourdes & St Bernadette St Lawrence's St Paul's Our Lady of the Rosary Holy Family St Patrick St Bernard's St Vincent de Paul Sacred Heart	Lawford's Gate Downend Filton Fishponds Henbury Kingswood Chipping Sodbury Yate Lawrence Weston Patchway Redfield Shirehampton Southmead Westbury-on-Trym
<b>St Alexander Briant</b>	Sacred Heart The Immaculate Conception	Chew Magna Clevedon
<b>Dean Fr Matt Anscombe</b>	St Dunstan's St Gerard Majella Christ the King St Francis of Assisi St Joseph's St Bernadette St Pius	Keynham Knowle Knowle West Nailsea Portishead Whitchurch Withywood
<b>St Kenelm</b>	St Gregory The Great Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary	Cheltenham Charlton Kings
<b>Dean Fr David Mills</b>	St Thomas More, Cheltenham St Catharine's St Peter's St Thomas of Canterbury St Benet's Our Lady and St Kenelm St Joseph's St Nicholas	Cheltenham Chipping Campden Cirencester Fairford Kemerton Stow-on-the-Wold Tewkesbury Winchcombe
<b>St Wulstan</b>	Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Our Lady of Victories	Churchdown Cinderford
<b>Dean Fr Gary Brassington</b>	St Margaret Mary St Dominic's St Augustine of Canterbury St Peter's St Patrick's Our Lady of Lourdes St Joseph's St Joseph's The Immaculate Conception Christ the King Holy Cross English Martyrs The Annunciation	Coleford Dursley Matson Gloucester Brockworth Newent Nympsfield Stonehouse Stroud Thornbury Wotton-under-Edge Tuffley Woodchester



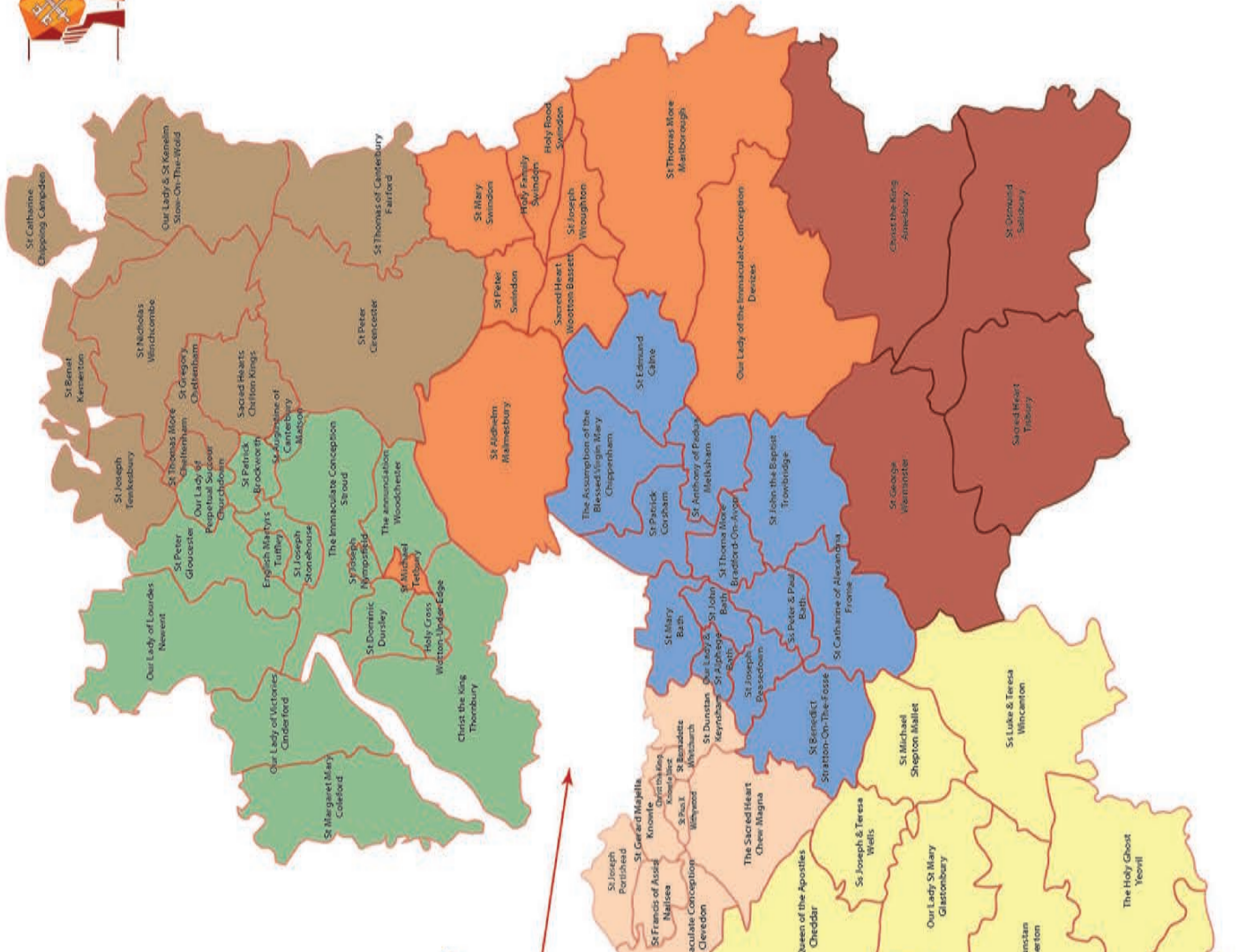
## DECLAN BISHOP OF CLIFTON

Deanery / Pastoral Area	Parishes	Location
St Aldhelm	Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception	Devizes
Dean	St Aldhelm's	Malmesbury
Fr Michael McAndrew	St Michael's	Tetbury
	St Thomas More's	Marlborough
	Holy Family	Swindon
	Holy Rood	Swindon
	St Mary's	Swindon
	St Peter's	Swindon
	The Sacred Heart	Royal Wootton Bassett
	St Joseph's	Wroughton
St Oliver Plunkett	St John The Evangelist	Bath
Dean	Our Lady & St Alphege's	Bath
Canon Tom Finnegan	St Mary's	Bath
	SS Peter & Paul	Bath
	St Thomas More's	Bradford on Avon
	St Edmund's	Calne
	The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Chippenham
	St Patrick's	Corsham
	St Catharine of Alexandria	Frome
	St Anthony of Padua	Melksham
	St Joseph's	Peasedown St John
	St Benedict's	Stratton-on-the-Fosse
	St John the Baptist	Trowbridge
Blessed Richard Whiting	English Martyrs	Chard
Dean	Our Lady Queen of the Apostles	Cheddar
Fr Dominic Findlay-Wilson	Our Lady St Mary of Glastonbury	Glastonbury
	St Michael's	Shepton Mallet
	St Dunstan's	Somerton
	SS Joseph and Teresa	Wells
	SS Luke and Teresa	Wincanton
	The Holy Ghost	Yeovil
St Edith of Wilton	Christ the King	Amesbury
Dean	St Osmond's	Salisbury
Fr Anthony Paris	The Sacred Heart	Tisbury
	St George's	Warminster
St Dunstan	St Joseph's	Bridgwater
Dean	Our Lady and the English Martyrs	Burnham-on-Sea
Fr David Savoury	St Stanislaus	Dulverton
	Sacred Heart	Minehead
	St George's	Taunton
	St Teresa of Lisieux	Taunton
	St John Fisher	Wellington
	Corpus Christi	Weston-Super-Mare
	Our Lady of Lourdes	Weston-Super-Mare
	St Joseph's	Weston-Super-Mare
	Cathedral Church of SS Peter & Paul	Clifton

# PARISHES & DEANERY/PASTORAL AREA CLIFTON DIOCESE



- St Edmund of Abingdon
- St Alexander Briant
- St Kenelm
- St Wulstan
- St Aldhelm
- St Oliver Plunkett
- Blessed Richard Whiting
- St Edith of Wilton
- St Dunstan



Cathedral Church of  
St Peter & Paul

## DIOCESAN PRAYER



God our Father,  
open the horizons of our minds and hearts  
so that we can see what hope your call holds for  
us.



Pour out the overflowing gifts of your Spirit  
so that we, your Church,  
may become a people of hope for our world.



We ask you this through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God for ever and ever.

Our Lady, Woman of Hope,  
pray for us.

St Peter, Rock of Hope,  
pray for us.

St Paul, Apostle of Hope,  
pray for us.